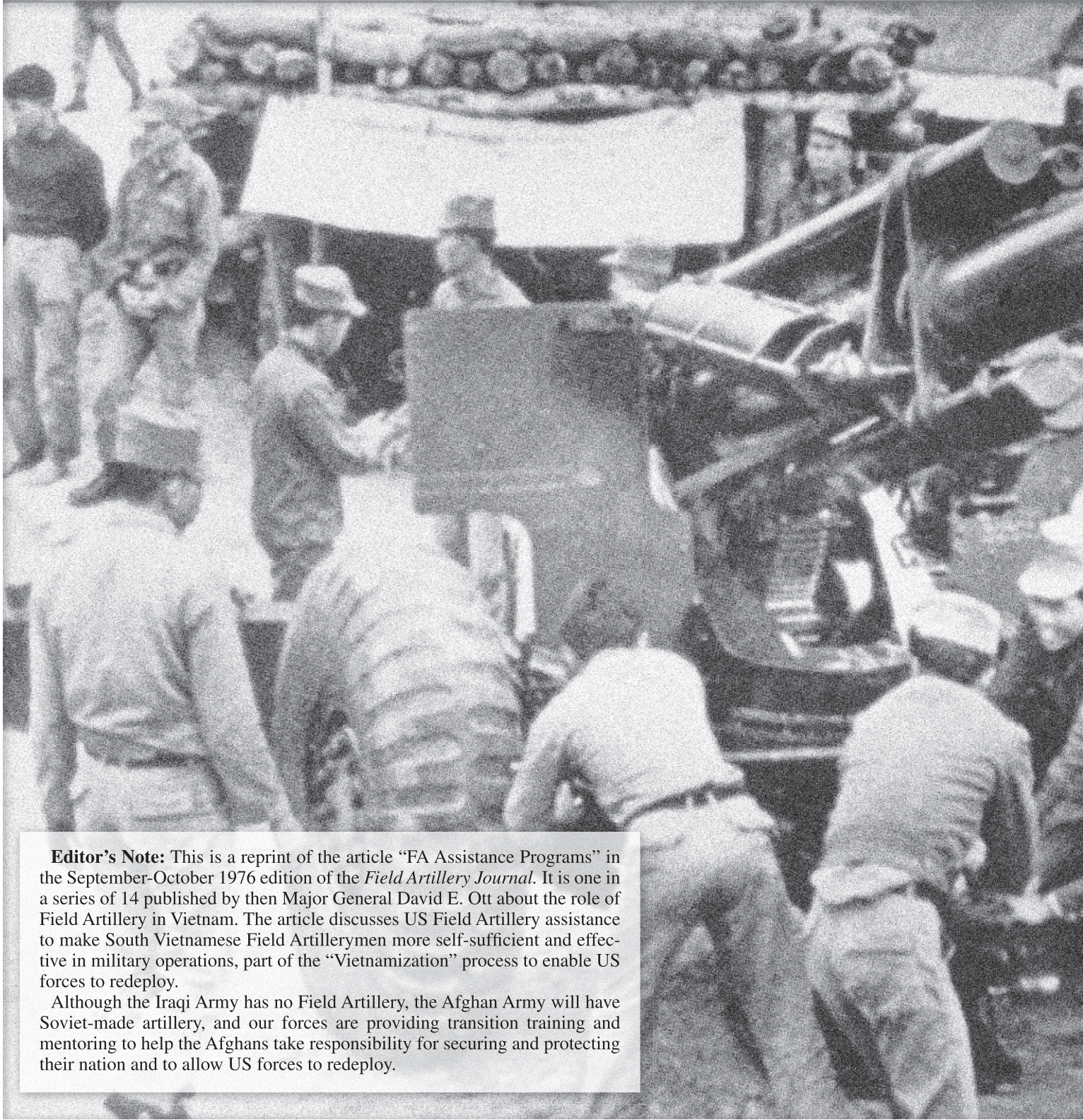


Vietnamization:



Editor's Note: This is a reprint of the article "FA Assistance Programs" in the September-October 1976 edition of the *Field Artillery Journal*. It is one in a series of 14 published by then Major General David E. Ott about the role of Field Artillery in Vietnam. The article discusses US Field Artillery assistance to make South Vietnamese Field Artillerymen more self-sufficient and effective in military operations, part of the "Vietnamization" process to enable US forces to redeploy.

Although the Iraqi Army has no Field Artillery, the Afghan Army will have Soviet-made artillery, and our forces are providing transition training and mentoring to help the Afghans take responsibility for securing and protecting their nation and to allow US forces to redeploy.



FA Assistance Programs

By Major General David E. Ott,
Commandant of the
Field Artillery School, 1973 -1976

General Ott's Introduction to the Series. *This monograph illuminates some of the more important activities—with attendant problems, shortcomings and achievements—of the US Army Field Artillery in Vietnam. The wide variations in terrain, supported forces, density of cannons, friendly population and enemy activity that prevailed throughout South Vietnam tend to make every action and every locale singular.*

Although based largely upon documents of a historical nature and organized in a generally chronological manner, this study does not purport to provide the precise details of history. Its purpose is to present an objective review of the near past in order to assure current awareness of the lessons we should have learned and to foster the positive consideration of those lessons in the formulation of appropriate operational concepts. My hope is that this monograph will give the reader an insight into the immense complexity of our operations in Vietnam. I believe it cannot help but also reflect the unsurpassed professionalism of the junior officers and NCOs of the Field Artillery and the outstanding morale and esprit de corps of the young citizen-soldiers with whom they served.

In November 1969, then President Richard M. Nixon officially established the goal of the American effort in the Vietnam conflict: enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume full responsibility for the security of their country. Although "Vietnamization" was a new word, the concept was, in fact, a return to an earlier policy—one that had all but disappeared in the feverish escalation from aid and advice to combat support to active participation.

As early as the summer of 1967, the first tentative steps toward Vietnamization were being taken. Concerned about the effectiveness of the Army of Vietnam (ARVN), Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) units, General William C. Westmoreland [Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, known as MACV] directed that a conference be held to air views, consider proposals and make recommendations through which assistance could be provided the Vietnamese military in order to mold it into an aggressive and responsible fighting force.

FA Assistance Programs. Senior American commanders met at Pleiku on 12 August 1967, and on the basis of their conclusions, the Commanding

General, I Field Force (IFF), Vietnam, directed that the Commanding General, IFF Artillery, "...establish liaison with Vietnamese units and... isolate problems to be alleviated through US training support."

The IFF Artillery immediately assigned a liaison officer to II Corps (Vietnamese) Artillery to "provide a channel for the request of supporting US artillery for ARVN operations in II CTZ [Corps Tactical Zone]." This officer was recalled when the necessary procedures had been established, and his duties were assumed by the Artillery officer of II Corps Advisory Group. To provide further assistance, an "on-call" liaison officer from the 52nd Artillery Group was designated.

Even as this coordination was being established, a decentralized assistance program was developing. On 28 September 1967, Brigadier General William O. Quirey directed that all field force Artillery battalions establish forward observer (FO) teams specifically to train RF and PF units in the techniques of fire adjustment. Further, battalions were to provide any assistance necessary to help ARVN Artillery units to achieve maximum technical proficiency.

An artillery unit with the Army of Vietnam readies a 155-mm M114A1 howitzer for firing near the Kontum Province.

This guidance, however, proved to be too general. Field force battalions provided only sporadic aid in the II Corps area, and effectiveness depended on the willingness of the Vietnamese participants in the program and the ability of the US units to do the job.

Four-Month Study. Meanwhile, the IFF Artillery had initiated a four-month study of ARVN Artillery operations to evaluate the effectiveness of their support. Total assets in II Corps were 103 105-mm howitzers and 42 155-mm howitzers. Of these, six 155-mm and 15 105-mm tubes were committed to sup-

port training centers. Although all school support weapons had the secondary mission of local area support, their primary function of school support prevented their effective utilization in support of operations. In addition 18 105-mm pieces were positioned in platoons at Special Forces and Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camps.

The remaining guns—55 105-mm and 30 155-mm pieces—had primary responsibility for supporting ARVN, RF and PF maneuver elements. Because this artillery also had to provide fire support for road security and the various political

headquarters throughout II Corps, platoon and split-battery configurations were the prevalent formations. The size of II CTZ, some 30,000 square miles, and the magnitude of the mission proved the artillery incapable of providing even marginal fire support to maneuver forces during offensive operations.

The study examined 10 long-term operations and 72 short-term operations. Long-term operations were defined as those performed within the framework of the normal mission of the maneuver force and short-term operations as those in response to specific and immediate needs, such as those based on special intelligence. Findings showed that Artillery supported slightly less than half of the short-term operations. Of those operations listed as being supported by Artillery, each maneuver battalion was shown to have received Artillery support which averaged slightly more than one platoon (two guns). The average support was less than one platoon of Artillery per battalion when all short-term operations were taken into consideration.

The study also showed that, although ARVN Artillery units were thoroughly grounded in the fundamentals of gunnery, they were severely hampered by poor maintenance practices, slipshod repair parts support and inadequate communications equipment. Further problem areas were encountered in the meteorological (Met) support and survey capabilities of the Vietnamese.

Based on this study, specific programs were initiated to upgrade the ability of the ARVN Artillery to support maneuver forces in the field. This aid was aimed at increasing the responsiveness of the firing units in answering calls-for-fire and the ability of the ground soldier to request and adjust fire. Because the mission of Vietnamese batteries continued to be security of roads and strategic installations, no attempts were made to increase the fire-massing capacity of these units.

Remedies. To remedy the problems exposed by the study, American Artillery units in early 1968 initiated four assistance programs. Task Force *Dai Bac I* (Task Force Cannon I) was formed by the 1st Battalion, 92nd Artillery (1-92 Arty) to assist Vietnamese Artillery units in the Kontum area. This program was short-term, lasting only 23-27 February 1968. Its primary mission was to ascertain the condition of the Vietnamese weapons and demonstrate the responsiveness of Vietnamese and US Artillery to calls-for-fire from ARVN, RF, PF and US units in



Figure 1: South Vietnam with Kontum Province Inset

the Kontum area.

To accomplish this mission, the 1-92 Arty established a fire direction center (FDC), collocated with the Vietnamese 221 Artillery Battalion at Kontum, that could control all Artillery fire in the area. The objective was to create a working Vietnamese FDC.

Another team with interests in logistics and maintenance was to examine and correct hardware deficiencies. Additional teams were designated to assist in firing battery operations, communications and survey. Because of the short duration of the program, specific objectives were established for each day to ensure that all areas were examined and upgraded.

The program revealed that significant shortcomings in FDC procedures were caused primarily by a lack of logistical support and by poor understanding of sophisticated gunnery procedures. Firing battery deficiencies were closely tied to logistical or maintenance support. Tubes ranged in age from 13 to 27 years and averaged 10,000 rounds per tube.

The task force provided the necessary logistical support to upgrade the weapons and instructed the Vietnamese in advanced FDC procedures. The task force also pointed out that the remaining problem areas were founded in the weak ARVN logistical system and recommended that Artillery advisers spend more time with their units and actively establish liaison with neighboring American units so that assistance could be made more readily available.

At the same time that Task Force *Dai Bac I* was being established, another program began to provide assistance to CIDG and Special Forces Artillery platoons. Responsibility for the program was given to the major Artillery commands in II Corps. These commands provided technical assistance to the CIDG Artillery platoons. Classes were conducted in fire direction, firing battery operations and maintenance. Initial success resulted in the continuation of the program on a regular basis.

Perhaps the most important of the four projects was the IFF and ARVN Associate Battery Program that began on 14 March 1968. The program was to augment the existing advisory effort, improve the effectiveness of Vietnamese forces and open channels for better coordination of fire support and mutual understanding. Under this concept, US Artillery units sponsored selected Vietnamese battalions in their locale and provided them with a responsive

American headquarters from which to request technical, maintenance and training assistance.

Finally, IFF Artillery developed a program of instruction to train Vietnamese Artillerymen in the use of antipersonnel (Beehive) ammunition in preparation for the time when Vietnamese firing units would be issued the special rounds. This program, however, never became functional because the Vietnamese Joint General Staff had not authorized their units to obtain and employ the ammunition.

Success. The initial success of these programs, coupled with the disastrous defeat suffered by the Communist forces during their ill-fated Tet offensive earlier in the year, allowed the embryonic Vietnamization program to grow. During the fall of 1968, military leaders in Vietnam studied after-action reports (AARs), intelligence estimates and staff studies pertinent to the Tet campaign and its immediate aftermath. From these evaluations a parallel course—one that would merge with President Nixon's some eight months later—began to germinate.

On the basis of an overall evaluation of the ARVN, it became evident to these leaders that if Vietnamese forces eventually were to assume the burden of the ground war, a test of their ability to operate semi-independently would be necessary. The emphasis on "semi-independence" rather than complete autonomy was in recognition of the inherent weakness of these forces in fire support and air assets.

To this end, a suitable testing ground had to be found. The area had to be secure enough to allow for unhampered transfer of forces before Vietnamese units became actively engaged but, at the same time, had to have potentially significant enemy activity to provide the Vietnamese with a viable test. Further, the testing ground had to be in an area of minimal danger to the pacification program. An ideal area was found in northern Kontum Province with its sparse population, potential enemy threat from Laos and Cambodia and relative isolation from the psychologically important population centers of the country. (See the map in Figure 1.)

Agreement Signed. Preliminary discussions between American and Vietnamese leaders began in late 1968, and a verbal agreement was reached in January 1969 between Lieutenant General William R. Peers, Commanding General, IFF, and Major General

Lu Mong Lan, Commander, II Corps. However, this agreement was not written, and the designated Vietnamese force, the 42nd Regiment, and its command headquarters, the 24th Special Tactical Zone (STZ), failed to assume responsibility for the area by 1 February 1969, as had been agreed.

Further, negotiations were hampered by the natural confusion of a change of command at IFF, and it was not until 12 April 1969 that General Lu Lan indicated general agreement with a new proposal. A draft memorandum of agreement was drawn up and signed by American and Vietnamese officials on 24 April 1969. On the same day, the exchange of forces neared completion and the ARVN assumed responsibility for northern Kontum Province.

In deference to the weakness of the Vietnamese Artillery (six 105-mm howitzers and six 155-mm howitzers), the agreement specifically provided that 4th Infantry Division Artillery units would assume artillery coverage of National Highway 14, the major north-south artery in the highlands, and that the Commanding General, IFF Artillery, would provide general support Artillery as required; support operations within the 24th STZ with a minimum of two light or medium Artillery batteries; and maintain the fire support coordination center to coordinate all fire support means available, including operation of air advisory stations.

The IFF was assigned the mission of providing the specified support to the 52nd Artillery Group headquarters in Pleiku. The 52nd immediately provided six light, 12 medium and five heavy Artillery pieces to the 24th STZ to augment organic Vietnamese batteries. Battery C, 4th Battalion, 42nd Artillery, a 4th Division Artillery unit, provided road coverage. Automatic weapons were allocated from Battery B, 4th Battalion, 60th Artillery.

Dan Quyen. With the assumption of responsibility for northern Kontum Province by the 24th STZ, the first major Vietnamese ground operation began. Dubbed "*Dan Quyen*" (People's Rights) by the Vietnamese, it grew out of special agent reports indicating a major buildup of enemy units southwest of the Ben Het CIDG camp, which sat precariously at the convergence of the Laotian, Cambodian and Vietnamese borders.

To head off Communist plans to execute a strong offensive effort in the highlands, the 24th STZ was tasked to conduct operations to spoil the plans, protect

Ben Het and compel enemy forces to retire to their Cambodian sanctuaries. The operation was conducted in three phases: Phase I (5-15 May) involved forces of three Vietnamese and two mobile strike force battalions screening the tri-border area west of Ben Het; Phase II (16 May-3 June), based on intelligence produced during the initial phase, was a six-battalion (plus) offensive operation conducted southeast of Ben Het and targeted against elements of the North Vietnamese 66th Infantry, 28th Infantry and 40th Artillery Regiments; and, Phase III (3-5 June) consisted primarily of bomb damage assessments by multi-battalion Vietnamese forces and the establishment of a defensive screen around the Dak To, Tan Canh and Ben Het areas.

By the end of the operation, the South Vietnamese had succeeded in mauling the Communist forces and establishing a favorable 7-to-1 kill ratio. In support of the operation, the 52nd Artillery Group provided 29 tubes of Artillery—12 105-mm howitzers, 12 155-mm howitzers, one 8-inch howitzer and four 175-mm guns—and assigned the 1-92 Arty to establish the forward command post for US support forces. This command post was later expanded into a fire support coordination center for all American Artillery in the area. From their own assets, Vietnamese forces utilized eight 155-mm and six 105-mm howitzers in support of the operation.

A total of 73,016 rounds was expended by friendly firing units. Enemy soldiers captured during the campaign expressed a fear of first-round volley fire employed by both South Vietnamese and US units in the form of random time-on-target missions.

Although the operation was deemed a success, a number of weaknesses became apparent. The magnitude and complexity of coordinating, integrating and controlling available fire support means virtually overwhelmed the 24th STZ staff at the

Dak To tactical operations center (TOC). Some of the blame for this failure was attributable to an inexperienced staff and the inadequate manning structure of the headquarters, but specific shortcomings were apparent as well.

When the 1-92 Arty established the US fire support coordination center at Dak To, ARVN commanders were encouraged to send representatives, but only one did so. Fire support activities, thus, were not coordinated properly, so flexibility was lost, resources were wasted, efforts were duplicated and, frequently, targets were not attacked with the appropriate means at the proper time.

This problem originated with the failure of the force commanders, while organizing for combat, to understand or appreciate the need to integrate maneuver plans and fire support plans closely and to collocate the tactical operations and fire support coordination centers. The problem finally was rectified two weeks after the operation started when the commander of the 1-92 Arty was tasked to establish an integrated fire support coordination center. This agency quickly matured into an effective organization capable of providing timely and accurate fire support.

Additional problems were encountered in fire clearances, coordination of fire support assets at the company level and requests for, and adjustment of Artillery fire. It became apparent that these deficiencies were a result of the dependence of the South Vietnamese commanders on American advisers.

These weaknesses were not corrected satisfactorily, and it was clear that additional stress in training would be required to upgrade the fire support coordination of Vietnamese units.

Despite the weaknesses noted during the campaign, the performance of the Vietnamese forces proved that they could plan and execute semi-independent ground operations successfully

against Communist main force units. The significance of this fact would not be apparent for another five months when the policy of Vietnamization became the stated objective of the American command in Vietnam.

Phase II. By 1968, MACV had submitted its plans for Phase II of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) Improvement and Modernization Plan. Phase II planning was based on assumptions that North Vietnamese intervention would increase and that the missions of the allied forces would remain substantially unchanged from those that had been stated for fiscal year 1968; that is, US and allied forces were assigned to destroy Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces and base areas, and South Vietnamese Army RF and PF units were to support the pacification program.

Because of these assumptions, the improvement plan was rather methodical and cautious. The proposal was submitted to the Secretary of Defense who disapproved and returned it to the Saigon planners for substantial revision.

In early 1969, the plan was resubmitted as Phase IIa, which assumed the same basic premises as those of the initial plan but substantially increased the speed and scope of the modernization. On 28 April 1969, the Deputy Secretary of Defense gave final approval to the MACV program as modified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, in his approving memo stated, "Vietnamizing the war should have the highest priority. Providing needed equipment for the RVNAF is, therefore, of greatest importance. To assure that equipment turned over to the RVNAF can be used effectively, it must be supported by (1) training and (2) logistic support."

Phase IIa of the Improvement and Modernization Plan recognized that major shortfalls existed in the firepower capabilities of the Vietnamese forces, and a substantial portion of the plan was devoted to rectifying this weakness. The equipment ceilings established by the plan were intended to increase the Artillery capability of the Vietnamese substantially.

These proposed figures were further modified when Presidents Nixon and Thieu met at Midway in June 1969. President Thieu presented the requirements as seen by the Vietnamese to President Nixon, who, in turn, gave them to General Creighton W. Abrams [new Commander, MACV] for study, comment and possible inclusion in the program.

Item	Phase I Accelerated FY 1969	Phase II FY 1970	Approved FY 1970	MACV Revised Nov, 1970	Total Shipped as of 31 Dec 1969
M101A1 105-mm Howitzer	602	776	731	731	730
M102 105-mm Howitzer	60	61	0	60	60
M114A1 155-mm Howitzer,	701	274	290	289	294

Figure 2: Vietnamization FA Equipment Delivery Status

One of the requirements, as seen by the Vietnamese, was heavy Artillery in the form of four eight-inch Field Artillery battalions. After this proposal was scrutinized by MACV, only portions of requests were approved. Three additional battalions of Artillery—two 105-mm and one 155-mm—were added to the fiscal year 1970 activation schedule. By the end of 1969, the Artillery improvement plan had undergone a number of revisions but delivery of Field Artillery weapons was being accomplished smoothly and ahead of schedule. The equipment delivery status is shown in Figure 2.

At the same time the master plan for Vietnamization was taking shape, the required training base to prepare the ARVN to assume a more appropriate share of the action immediately, as well as the entire combat role in the future, was receiving careful consideration from the appropriate American commands throughout the country. IFF Artillery, which had a substantial jump on the other headquarters in establishing a training assistance program for Vietnamese forces, reviewed its existing programs, found them to be valid. On the basis of additional studies, it added two plans through which it intended to improve the capabilities of RF and PF units to call for and adjust Artillery fire. In addition, basic fire planning was taught to RF units so they could support their own operations.

Based on this program, a comprehensive defensive target list was developed throughout II Corps and, if a target fell within range of an Artillery unit, fire was adjusted onto it. This program increased hamlet and village security. Before initiation of the plan, only 684 of the existing 4,208 defensive targets planned at various times during the war had been fired on. By August 1969, with the emphasis applied by IFF Artillery, each of the 52 districts in II Corps had a fire plan, 5,869 targets had been developed and 32 percent of the targets had been fired on. The effectiveness of the program was demonstrated during the week of 11 August 1969 when eight friendly hamlets drove off Viet Cong attacks by simply calling for previously fired-in defensive targets.

Coordinated Assistance. In III CTZ, IIFF Artillery was also examining the Vietnamization of Artillery support. Until the summer of 1969, assistance to Vietnamese Artillery had been limited to small contact teams concerned primarily with assisting the Vietnamese to solve maintenance and logistics problems

1. Exchange visits of battery personnel.
2. Combine fire support coordination centers.
3. Develop procedures and coordination requirements for planning combined fire support.
4. Standardize operational readiness evaluations.
5. Combine unit refresher training programs.
6. Standardize tube calibration procedures.
7. Standardize a registration policy.
8. Combine meteorological data.
9. Combine survey control.

Figure 3: Nine Mutual Support Projects

by making American supply channels available for immediate, pressing needs. However, during the summer of 1969, through the efforts of the commanders of IIFF Artillery and III Corps Artillery, the need for a coordinated assistance program was examined. Such a program would complement the IIFF and III Corps Operation *Dong Tien* (Forward Together). A combined working committee was formed to develop a plan for the program, define its concepts and establish policies and procedures for coordinating all mutual support projects. This would increase the capabilities and effectiveness of the combined Artillery team in III Corps.

The objectives of the program, as seen by the committee, were to improve coordination and mutual understanding between allied Artillery units; to improve fire support effectiveness by combining planning and coordination of fire support, standardizing techniques and improving the quality of training; and to increase artillery firing capabilities. To accomplish the program objectives, the planning committee developed nine mutual support projects as shown in Figure 3.

The proposed projects were translated into concrete programs and initiated in a low-key manner through the associate battery concept. Key personnel from both US and Vietnamese units visited their "sister" battery to gain a better understanding of each other's problems, observe battery operations and exchange views.

This exchange of ideas led naturally to establishing the standardized operational readiness evaluations (OREs). A checklist was developed to measure the effectiveness of Artillery units. The

checklist was particularly effective because it matched performance against an established standard rather than against another unit, minimizing the possibility of embarrassment or loss of face—an important consideration with the Vietnamese.

To prepare units for OREs, unit refresher training was initiated. Mobile training teams (MTTs) were created and dispatched to isolated areas to give instruction. Classes were kept small so that thorough instruction could be given to key personnel and specialists. On-the-job training was conducted whenever possible.

To standardize procedures and improve the accuracy of Vietnamese Artillery fires, the committee developed a plan to ensure that all weapons were calibrated annually. Second, a standardized registration policy was adopted throughout III Corps and emphasis was placed on persuading Vietnamese units to accept American registration practices.

To refine Artillery accuracy further, teams provided assistance to Vietnamese units to develop the capability to use Met data. All US Met stations in III Corps began to conduct dual-language broadcasts four times daily. Finally, a combined effort was initiated to extend survey control to all Artillery units in III Corps.

By May 1970, the *Dong Tien* program was well underway and had scored a number of successes. More than 88 percent of the howitzers employed by Vietnamese Artillery in III Corps were calibrated; survey was established at 67 of the 122 Vietnamese firing positions (an increase of 55 percent in six months); Met data were employed by a majority of the Vietnamese units; and, a substantial number of ARVN Artillery units were using American registration techniques.

With the refinement and improvement of Vietnamese fire support, the necessity to control these fires became apparent. Combined fire support coordination centers were created in various provinces throughout III Corps. These centers included Vietnamese, US and other allied forces' Artillery representatives, US Air Force representatives and, where necessary, US Navy personnel. In addition to planning fire support and clearing fires, they provided a readily accessible means for the interchange of fire requests between ARVN and US units. These agencies significantly increased mutual support and reduced reliance on US Artillery.

In addition to *Dong Tien*, three other

1971	1972	1973
Medium Artillery	Medium Artillery	Medium Artillery
Heavy Artillery	Heavy Artillery	
Long-Range Artillery		

Figure 4: Firepower Weaknesses

significant programs were initiated. The CIDG Artillery School was opened at Trang Sup on 1 September 1969. It was created to train CIDG Artillerymen to assume fire support responsibility for seven Special Forces camps.

The school was staffed and operated by the 23rd Artillery Group, which designed a compact but thorough 10-week course. The school conducted three sessions during which 186 CIDG Artillerymen were trained and deployed to designated camps. With the irregulars assuming Artillery duties at these outposts, Vietnamese Army Artillerymen were relieved to return to their regular force structures.

In September 1969, III Corps Artillery began training ARVN Artillery batteries in air movement techniques and jungle operations. Training was completed in December 1969, and the first battery assumed direct support of the 3rd Mobile Strike Force, a mission that had been the responsibility of the US Jungle Battery, a composite battery of three 105-mm and three 155-mm howitzers. This III Corps training program enabled six guns to be returned to force Artillery assets.

Finally, the Fire Direction Officer's School, conducted by FF Artillery for its own officers, was made available to Vietnamese personnel. This week-long course helped standardize Artillery procedures in III Corps by providing comprehensive instruction in the latest gunnery techniques used by the US Artillery. By May of 1970, 56 Vietnamese officers had been graduated from this school.

At the same time, considerations for Vietnamization were being examined in Military Region I. With the impending redeployment of the 3rd US Marine Division, the Vietnamese role would increase significantly. From November 1969 until 9 March 1970, the primary exchange of ideas and programs took place between XXIV Corps Artillery and Vietnamese 1st Division Artillery because, until its redeployment in March 1970, the III Marine Amphibious Force

was the principal American headquarters in the northern provinces. This interplay between the Americans and Vietnamese consisted of decentralized programs initiated at all levels through personal contact and coordination established by the US commanders.

In early 1970, XXIV Corps Artillery, in anticipation of the impending departure of the Marines, began to study the feasibility of a more intensive and centralized Vietnamization program. A XXIV Corps regulation was prepared by corps Artillery to outline the minimum requirements for ensuring effective coordination of US and Vietnamese fires. The regulation included provisions for establishing liaison between supporting Artillery elements and territorial force headquarters down to the sub-sector level.

At the same time, work was initiated to revamp the Artillery and air strike warning system as a dual system existed within the Vietnamese and US chains of command. As American withdrawals continued, inordinate difficulties might be experienced by both US and Vietnamese pilots unless the system was effectively Vietnamized. After careful study, the collocation of the respective warning agencies was adopted as the most practical solution—one that would allow for the most orderly eventual transfer of responsibility to the Vietnamese when US strength in Military Region I no longer justified the combined effort.

During March 1970, the XXIV Corps Artillery initiated an Artillery instructor training program in support of the Vietnamese Artillery refresher training project. Representatives of all Artillery battalions in the Vietnamese 1st Division and the Quan Da Special Zone underwent three weeks of instruction to prepare them to conduct training in their own organizations. Separate courses were presented in fire direction procedures, firing battery operations and maintenance. After completing the instructor training phase, each battalion formed an MTT which was augmented by one US officer

and one US NCO. These teams then moved to the field to conduct refresher training at battery locations.

One month later, a team of officers from XXIV Corps Artillery and I Corps Artillery (Vietnamese) conducted a survey to determine the proficiency of RF and PF personnel in Artillery adjustment procedures and the desirability of conducting training in the subject. The team interviewed Vietnamese officials and US advisers in all five provinces. All agreed on the necessity for FO training and agreed to support a combined US and Vietnamese program to provide such training.

Two programs were instituted, one for RF and one for PF. XXIV Corps directed that the 23rd Infantry (Americal) Division incorporate the RF training into its RF and PF leadership and orientation course. The goal of the course was to train observers from sector headquarters, sub-sector headquarters, battalion headquarters, company group headquarters and company. The first class started on 10 June 1970 and 889 RF officers were scheduled to undergo training.

Training for the PF was assigned to I Corps Artillery which designed a comprehensive three-day course stressing basic essentials and live firing. A total of 3,138 PF leaders was scheduled to learn adjustment procedures in an eight-week period beginning 15 June 1970.

Further, agencies responsible for existing programs that had been established to support American units were directed to shift their emphasis to Vietnamese Artillery batteries. In February 1970, the corps Artillery firing battery inspection team began providing technical assistance to Vietnamese units. Detailed technical checks of fire direction procedures, firing battery operations, maintenance and safety were made at each battery visited. On-the-spot critiques were given during the inspections, and formal reports were submitted to I Corps Artillery.

Logistical support was limited primarily to technical assistance and emergency aid to ensure that the Vietnamese supply system was exercised. Whenever emergency assistance was given in the form of supplies or repair parts, one of the contingencies under which it was granted was that the Vietnamese unit would initiate parallel supply action in its logistics channels to ensure that the demand was recorded.

Even as these programs were being initiated, MACV was finalizing the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Plan

for fiscal year 1971. An analysis of Vietnamese combat capability conducted as part of this plan revealed that a primary shortfall existed in Artillery. The study projected weaknesses in firepower for the coming three fiscal years in the areas shown in Figure 4.

In addition, the rapid expansion of RVNAF cut drastically into their experienced manpower pool and, in turn, diluted the leadership and technical base of newly created Artillery units. To offset this problem, MACV emphasized the improvement of instruction at the Vietnamese Artillery School and approved its expansion.

During 1970, the Artillery School enrolled 2,327 students, well above the 1,715 initially planned for the year. Instruction was improved and new programs were prepared. A copy of the program for the US Artillery Officer Advanced Course was obtained from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, edited to emphasize essential portions and provided to the director of instruction for updating the battalion commanders' course. Several new gun emplacements with concrete ammunition and personnel bunkers were built into the school demonstration area.

In June 1970, the most significant training improvement occurred when the school began to coordinate service practice, fire direction and gun crew training during live-fire exercises. This arrangement saved ammunition and training time and released support-troop gun crews to perform maintenance. The training improved noticeably after the commandant directed that classes be inspected daily and written reports be submitted.

RVNAF Program. In consonance with the American Vietnamization plan, the RVNAF Artillery Command implemented a new training program titled the "Reorganization Technique Plan." The program was to operate in an 11-month timeframe and was to raise the technical proficiency of all Vietnamese Artillery units.

During Phase I (January and February 1970), the Artillery Command developed the concepts and disseminated instructions and lesson plans to the Artillery units, which in turn formed mobile instruction teams. In Phase II (March 1970), the various division Artillery and corps Artillery headquarters consolidated the MTTs, issued instructions and conducted instructor training. In Phase III (April through November 1970), two-week training programs were presented at all firing positions and a proficiency

test was administered. To ensure the adequacy of the training, the corps or division Artillery headquarters administered a unit test 30 days after the MTTs had completed the training and individual testing of all firing elements.

Once MACV had established the added emphasis necessary to create a strong training base, it examined the problems of the projected artillery shortfalls. It became apparent that the fragmented positioning of Artillery, as practiced by South Vietnamese Army units to secure lines of communication and strategic centers of population, detracted from the Artillery's support of offensive operations. Even with the activation of new Artillery battalions, the ratio of Artillery tubes to maneuver battalions did not increase significantly.

Further, the requirement to man Artillery platoons in static locations cut into the manpower pool of Vietnamese forces and created difficulties during new unit activations. To offset this weakness, MACV approved the addition of 176 two-gun fire support platoons to replace Vietnamese Artillery in fixed sites. Each platoon was authorized 29 spaces to be provided from RF assets. By year's end, 100 of the 176 platoons were activated and, of these, 53 were deployed throughout Vietnam.

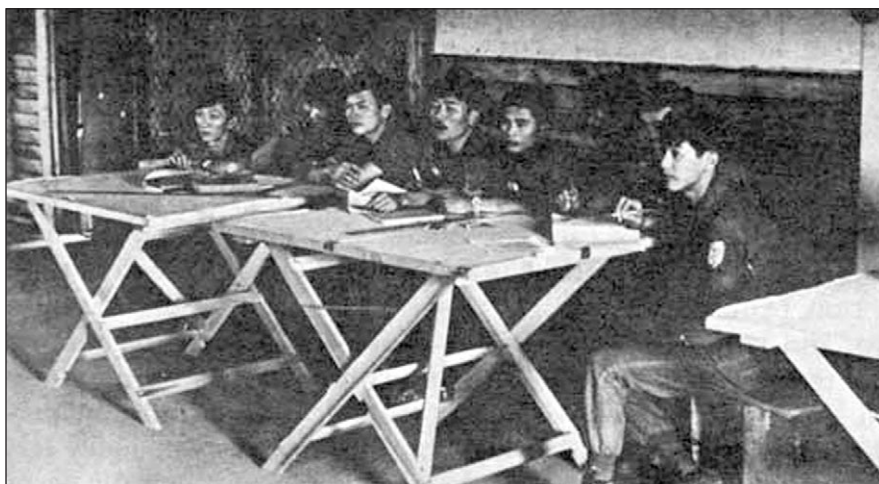
Training of the territorial Artillerymen varied among military regions. In Military Region I, contingency plans, which had been formulated by the XXIV Corps Artillery to train these forces, were activated. In Military Region II, training was accomplished at the Artillery School and the Vietnamese division training centers. IIFF Artillery reoriented the CIDG Artillery School. In Military Region IV, the Vietnamese Corps Artil-

lery established a training center for the RF Artillerymen.

With at least part of the light artillery problem solved, planners in Saigon attacked the Vietnamese long-range firepower weakness. After thorough investigation, Project Enhance was promulgated. This plan authorized the activation and deployment of five 175-mm gun battalions. Three of these battalions were scheduled for deployment in Military Region I. Two of these battalions were to be trained, equipped and deployed along the demilitarized zone in 1971 to replace withdrawing American units. The remaining two battalions were projected for Regions II and III.

Editor's Note: The entire 14-article series published from January-February 1975 until March-April 1977 is online at Sill-www.army.mil/famag/index.asp.

Major General David E. Ott was the Commandant of the Field Artillery School, Chief of Field Artillery and Commanding General of Fort Sill, Oklahoma, from 1973 until 1976. At that time, he was promoted to Lieutenant General and became the Commanding General of VII Corps in Germany, retiring in 1978. During his career, he was the Director of the Vietnam Task Force for the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC; Commanding General of the US Army in Thailand; Field and Air Defense Artillery Branch Chief and then Field Artillery Branch Chief, Washington DC; Commander of the 25th Infantry Division Artillery in Vietnam, the same division in which he served as a Battalion Executive Officer and S3 during the Korean War; and Commander of an 8-inch howitzer battalion in V Corps Artillery, Germany. General Ott is the author of the book *Field Artillery, 1954-1974*. He died 21 June 2004 from Legionnaire's disease at the age of 81.



Army of Vietnam (ARVN) soldiers attend a fire direction class.